

Contributions

CHRISTIAN WARFARE

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Christians, true Christians, are faithful disciples, followers, and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are engaged in a warfare, a perpetual, uncompromising warfare; and in these days of war and warlike interest and agitation, it is important that we should proclaim and spread abroad a clear and full knowledge of the character of our warfare. For an opening text see II Cor. 10:3, 4.

"For tho we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty thro God to the pulling down of strongholds.)"

War is a contest between states or nations, carried on by force. This contest is executed by their armies of soldiers, who are armed with weapons such as swords, spears, muskets and cannons, with which to slay or subdue their enemies. These are carnal weapons used for carnage, for the destruction of lives and property in order to subdue and conquer. For illustration and demonstration we need only to refer to the war that is now going on between Spain, Cuba, the Philippines, and the United States, to see some of the ravages and terrible destruction of lives and property, in what is spoken of as a civil war, but which Paul, the author of our text would call carnal warfare.

We are asked whether we, as brethren, Christians, followers of Christ, take any active part in war of this kind. Our answer is, or should be, no we do not; and according to the Gospel of Christ—according to the teachings of Christ and his apostles—we cannot and dare not. This is a little difficult to understand and hard to receive, and we are called upon for a "thus saith the Lord" for our authority. In this essay an effort will be made to give a statement of some of the scriptures and facts bearing on the subject, so that the sincere, conscientious inquirer may understand what we hold to be the teachings of the gospel of Christ, our rule of faith and practice on this subject.

We want to keep before us what the church of Christ is or should be. It is or should be composed of men and women of all nations, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have accepted him as their Redeemer and Savior, their Lord and Master on the terms of the gospel. These are brethren and sisters in Christ; they are children of God, members of his family, and as such they have a pure, deep, unchanging and unfailing love, not only of their father and their elder brother, but of one another. These are interested in each other's welfare, temporal and spiritual, and

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are under obligations to labor for each other's good and happiness in time and for eternity.

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, in relation to the church says: "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and thro all and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. . . . And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. 4:1-13.

Now, with this thought of the church of Christ before us, with this fraternity and unity, this love, and peace, and good will of its membership, how is it possible for us to enlist under the flags of different nations and go out to meet one another, on sea or land, to destroy each other's property and to kill one another? It cannot be; it is impossible.

The prophet Isaiah, (9:6, 7,) in reference to Christ says: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." As Christians we are subjects of and should be subject to this "Prince of Peace." Let us, then, hear what he has to say upon this subject, that we may prove faithful and submissive to him in this as in all things.

In Christ's sermon on the mount he said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Matt. 5:38, 39. In the same discourse he said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." Matt. 5:43, 44. Read to the end of the chapter. How can we follow these instructions of The Prince of Peace, and at the same time arm ourselves with muskets and swords, and go out upon the

battle-field and shoot down our enemies, and cut off their heads? It cannot be done: the two will not go together.

The apostle Paul, in Rom. 12:14, etc., says: "Bless them which persecute you, bless, and curse not. . . . Recompense to no man evil for evil. . . . If it be possible as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." "Paul was Saul of Tarsus. Before his conversion to Christianity he was religious and very zealous; and 'he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and healing men and women, committed them to prison.'" Acts 8:3. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," while on his way to Damascus, was miraculously and thoroughly converted. (See Acts 9:) Now he became a Christian, a chosen apostle, fully instructed and inspired, and he teaches exactly what the Lord and Master, The Prince of Peace, and all of the apostles, taught in relation to love, peace and good will, as is plainly seen in his language already quoted.

But this Paul is the author of our text, in which he sets forth the fact that Christians are engaged in a warfare; that we have weapons that are "mighty thro God to the pulling down of strongholds." But he says, "for tho we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh," and "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." The church of Christ is a spiritual body: we are not a civil nation with a civil government, like God's chosen people, Israel, who had a country, a nationality, a civil government with its rules and officials, and even its armies, like other nations. To this people "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17. We, as Christ's people should be found in all the world, in all nations whatever their form of government; and we should be subject to the powers that be, under which we live, as long as we are not asked to do anything contrary to our higher government and law. If, however, we should be asked to do anything contrary to the requirements of the gospel, we must obey God rather than man; and even if there should be persecution, we must follow The Prince of Peace and suffer the consequences. It is better to be faithful, even tho we should be put to death, than to disobey Christ and be lost.

This is merely an opening of the subject, but it is hoped that it may be understood and received; and it is desired